



# DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to [DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov)



Participating in the appreciation breakfast (bottom row from left): Don Lada, Harold Robbs, Faye Townsend, Roxanne Price, Michelle Voorhies, Gary Haggart and Wendell Jennings. From stairs (going up and right): Director Sheryl Thompson, Tony Ennis, Maryum Rasool, Mary Johnson, Laverna King, Gayle Hartwell, Deb Pascoe, Shirley Milton and Jane O'Dell.

## Genesee County thanks community reps with appreciation breakfast

From Kimberlee LeFear  
Family to Family Coordinator  
Genesee County DHS, Flint  
[LafearK@michigan.gov](mailto:LafearK@michigan.gov)

The Genesee County Department of Human Services held a community representative appreciation breakfast March 8 at the Child Advocacy Center in Flint. The breakfast honored the community representatives who attend the team decision making meetings through the Family to Family Initiative.

Currently, Genesee County has over 50 community representatives. This amount has continued to increase since the start of team decision meetings last Sept. 25. Since that date there have been more than 225 of the meetings in Genesee County with more than 1,500 people that have attended. In addition, community representatives are attending about 45 percent of the meetings.

During the event the representatives were provided with breakfast, giveaways and flower seeds for "planting seeds in the life of children." Representatives' feedback on their roles indicated they learned something new about the child welfare system. Their comments included:

- "TDMs (team decision making) focus on the family strengths."
- "I learned that DHS doesn't just snatch kids."

*continues on page 2*

*Click to read...*

Local office stories.....2

DHS news roundup.....3

Your letters.....4

## Genesee County thanks community reps with appreciation breakfast

*continues from page 1*

■ Another community representative reported a family didn't want him involved in their meeting. The representative asked if he could offer a word of encouragement before the meeting. The family agreed and subsequently asked him to sit in on the team decision meeting.

Based on information from surveys, participants value and appreciate community representatives. Genesee County staff thank them for their dedication and the awesome jobs they do. They continue to do a great job in volunteering their time to help improve outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system.

Family to Family is part of the DHS child welfare reform effort to improve the outcomes for children and families by emphasizing safety, stability, permanence and well-being. Team decision making meetings include family members and their support system, service providers, community representatives, foster parents, and DHS staff. During the meeting, participants share information that relates to protection of children and functioning of the family. The goal of the meeting is to reach a consensus about a plan that protects the children and preserves or reunifies the family. Community representatives are vital to the decision making process; they are neutral parties that can represent the family's community, identify available resources, and help the family understand the department's concerns related to safety and risk.



**BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT BERRIEN DHS IN BENTON HARBOR.** Berrien County staff were treated to a special luncheon potluck on Feb. 28 to honor of Black History Month. An outstanding display of historical figures and events in black History was presented on agency bulletin boards and office spaces. Pictured staff members who planned and coordinated the activities and the potluck – from left are **Ganella Anderson, Eric Sales, Pam Dukes, Roshonda Leslie, and Beverly Woodson.** – from **Lee Stults**



**HUMAN SERVICE AWARDS PRESENTED.** The 2007 Donald J. Trap Human Service Awards were presented March 2 at Baker College Welcome Center in Owosso during a luncheon for the fifth annual Shiawassee County Conference for Child and Family Service Providers. Nancy Friel, left, a foster parent since 1999, and Ned Bromley, right, of Shiawassee Regional Education Service District, received the awards recognizing a volunteer and a paid employee of a human service agency. Don Trap, center, last year's recipient of the award named in his honor, presented the awards. Honorable mentions went to **Dawn Ray**, Shiawassee County Department of Human Services, Detective Sergeant Scott Shenk, Shiawassee County Sheriff Department, and Jill Redmond, Shiawassee Regional Education Service District. – From **Pam Holman**

Photo: The Argus-Press (Owosso)/Cheryll Warren/used with permission



## DHS news roundup

**April 17**—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service recently congratulated Michigan Department of Human Services for its fiscal year 2006 performance in claims management – the process of recovering overpayments caused by errors or fraud. "For the second year in a row, both the number of claims and dollars (recovered)...in FY 2006 increased over the prior year," the FNS said in a report it issued in February. "This is a very significant positive trend...after many years of seriously downward spiraling claims performance in the state." The report said DHS:

- Increased claims, or requests to return overpayments, from 3,840 in 2005 to 4,459 in 2006.
- Increased the amount to be returned from \$2.6 million in 2005 to more than \$3.5 million in 2006.
- Increased overpayment collections from about \$4.9 million in 2005 to more than \$6.7 million in 2006.

"This shows we are serving the nutritional needs of Michigan citizens and, at the same time, ensuring proper use of taxpayer dollars," Marianne Udow said. "This is substantial and important improvement for which Department of Human Services field, policy, inspector general and recoupment staff can take pride."



**April 13** - DHS announced it is out of funds for energy crisis assistance for fiscal year 2007. Individuals receiving home heating credits will continue to receive assistance through September 2007, but new applications for energy crisis assistance will be denied due to lack of funds. DHS has provided low-income residents \$45.7 million for crisis assistance since October 2006. About \$1.9 million goes to Michigan families each week. Gov. Jennifer Granholm and 34 other governors signed a letter in February urging Washington to restore the \$1 billion cut from LIHEAP in fiscal year 2007. The Michigan Senate and House adopted non-binding resolutions urging the funds to be released. The resolution also protested the proposed \$380 million cut to LIHEAP federal funds in 2008. Michigan could receive as much as \$47 million less in coming years under these proposals. Reduced funding will further limit energy assistance for Michigan families. "For many Michigan families, it is a choice of whether to heat or to eat," DHS director Udow said. "I can only add my voice to the many

Michigan leaders, including Governor Granholm, who urged the president to release emergency LIHEAP funds." In fiscal year 2006 there were 389,561 Michigan low-income households that received an average payment of \$193 in the home heating credit. Another 108,895 households received an average payment of \$488 for emergency payments for heat and energy costs. Another 799 households received an average payment of \$1,071 for emergency energy-related repairs. Funding for LIHEAP was at an all-time high in 2006.

**April 10** – DHS and state partners celebrated Safe Delivery Day in Michigan. Under Michigan's Safe Delivery of Newborns Act parents have a safe place to leave a newborn infant, confidentially and without fear of punishment. "Since 2001, the Safe Delivery of Newborns Act has helped to save 44 infants from being abandoned in hazardous locations," Udow said. "This law gives parents an option to allow their newborn a chance to live a full and healthy life." The act allows the parent to surrender the infant without breaking any laws or giving any identifying information to the emergency service provider. Although the parent remains anonymous, he or she is encouraged to provide family and medical background that could be useful to the child in the future. "Sometimes, young and troubled parents with significant issues feel like they have nowhere else to turn and may subject their newborn to incredibly unsafe conditions which can result in death," said Janet Olszewski, Director of the Department of Community Health. "The Safe Delivery of Newborns Act gives those individuals hope and options when they feel like there is no other solution."

■ For more information go to [www.michigan.gov/safedelivery](http://www.michigan.gov/safedelivery)

**April 4** – DHS Leadership Academy has been selected as one of the Top 50 programs in the 2007 Innovations in American Government Awards competition. The program was selected from nearly 1,000 applications and will be considered for a \$100,000 grant. The Leadership Academy selects high potential leaders and accelerates their professional skill development through a two-year intensive program to prepare them for high level positions at DHS. Academy participants are trained in a broad range of leadership competencies rather than groomed for particular positions. The Innovations in American Government Program, administered by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, is a significant force in recognizing and promoting excellence and creativity in the public sector. By highlighting exemplary models of government's innovative performance, the program serves as a catalyst for continued progress in addressing the nation's most pressing public concerns. Each final winner is eligible to receive a grant of \$100,000 to be directed toward replication and dissemination activities.

■ Read the full news releases and more recent news at [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs), "News, Publications & Information", "Newsroom", "Press Releases".

**Date:** March 16  
**To:** DHS Matters!  
**Subj:** April Coleman

April Coleman was one of our best adoption workers in Kalamazoo County and she recently transferred to CPS. I want her to know that she went above and beyond the call of duty. She helped the adoption unit accomplish 56 adoptions last year and she had 13 adoptions on Adoption Day last year. April worked as a team with foster care workers and her sweet and caring spirit shows that she is committed to children. You rock! Keep up the good work!

**Sherri Guidry**, MSW  
Children Service Specialist  
Kalamazoo DHS, Kalamazoo

Your letters,  
intercepted  
and otherwise

**Date:** March 8  
**To:** St. Joseph County DHS, Centreville  
Children's Protective Services

**Subj:** Thanks

Hello. I am writing this letter to thank you. Everyone who works in Children's Protective Services works hard every day to protect my life and the lives of other children. You have saved many people's lives and I hope that everyone is very proud of themselves.

You are working to unite me with my mom. I know a lot of people that work there. They all care about children and how they live and grow up. I used to not like you because of the situation, but now I realize that you are doing everything to help me. Right now I live with some of the best people in the world; you surely did put me with the right people. Every time I come to your building I see everyone working hard for the benefit of the children, sometimes even the parents.

I'm actually glad now that you are part of my life. I thank God for you every day and I hope you know how important you are in a lot of children's lives, not just my own. Thank you for everything you are doing. Have a nice day!

**Name withheld**

■ *State law protects the privacy of minor children. The author is a minor foster child in St. Joseph County whose identity is being withheld to protect his/her privacy.*

**Date:** Feb. 21  
**To:** Barbara Klinglenmaier, CPS Manager  
James L. Miller, CPS Specialist  
Muskegon DHS, Muskegon Heights

**Subj:** Thank you note

Jim, I would like to thank you for a job well done on the case we transferred to you and the excellent manner in which you conducted the investigation and conducted the DHS case for court. This has been a difficult situation for you and not once have you faltered in shouldering the responsibility. Your professionalism made the entire ordeal manageable and always kept the focus on making sure the children involved were safe. My thanks to you.

Barb, I also wanted to thank you for the great working relationship you promoted in resolving this rather difficult situation. Your understanding and ability make sure the SWSS transfer from CPS to foster care was a huge help as well as making time to discuss the parameters in handling this case. (It is) always a pleasure to work with you.

I would like to bring this situation to the attention of your director, Jane Johnson. I strongly feel that CPS staff and its management too rarely hear of the situations in which they are appreciated and this occasion certainly needs to be recognized. Thanks so much. Semper fi.

**Michael R. Brown**, CPS Supervisor  
Kent County DHS  
Grand Rapids

### Submitting a letter for publication

- Ensure your supervisor knows about this and approves.
- If a client sent the letter, have them sign a **Consent for Publication** form, which is downloadable from the MS Word template as form **0199.dot**
- Obtain the verbal permission of everyone named in the letter before sending it for publication; obtain the verbal permission of letter writers that are not clients.
- Include the letter writer's hometown and the job classification(s) of the employee(s) cited in the letter.
- Send the letter and a copy of the signed consent form by e-mail to [DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov) or send a fax to Larry VanDeSande at 517-373-8471.

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